

In the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) In a local area network comprising a plurality of terminals configured for running client applications and connecting to the Internet, and each of said plurality of terminals including packet routing software having the ability to control divideing a request for information from a content server issued by one of said plurality of terminals into a plurality of packets, and to distribute the plurality of packets via the local area network to others of said plurality of terminals, a method of sending data over a communications network, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) upon activation of each of said plurality of terminals, each said terminal sending a message to at least a reconstitution server to indicate that said terminal is active;

(ba) generating a request for information from a content server coupled to a wide area network by an originating active terminal, said originating active terminal coupled by means of a local area network to each of said other of said plurality of active terminals;

(bc) each active terminal periodically sending a first status

message to the other of the plurality of terminals in the local area network and to a reconstitution server to indicate that it is active;

(ed) dividing the request for information from a content server into a plurality of packets by said originating active terminal;

(~~ee~~) the originating active terminal selectively distributing, under control of its packet routing software, the plurality of packets between a first plurality of active terminals in the local area network by means of a first communication path internal to and forming the local area network, each of said first plurality of active terminals ~~(110a, 110b, 110c, 110d)~~ having a second communication path, said second communication path comprising an associated ~~direct~~ wide area connection directly to the Internet, said associated direct wide area network connection to the Internet of a at least a first one of said first plurality of active terminals in the local area network different from an associated, direct, wide area network connection to the Internet of at least a second one~~the remainder~~ of said first plurality of active terminals, the plurality of packets being distributed between active terminals over the local area network;

(ef) each of said first plurality of active terminals transmitting each of said first plurality of packets received by a given active terminal during step (de) over its associated, direct, wide area connection to the Internet to said reconstitution server coupled to the Internet, such that the originating active terminal shares the bandwidth of the associated, different wide area connections to the internet of said first plurality of active terminals; and

(fg) the reconstitution server receiving the plurality of packets from said first plurality of active terminals in the local area network via said at least a first and second plurality of said associated, different and direct wide area connections, reconstituting the plurality of packets into said request for information from said content server issued by said originating active terminal, and sending the reconstituted plurality of packets to the content server as said request for information.

2. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, comprising the further steps of:

(g_h) the content server sending content data to the reconstitution server in response to the request received in step (f_g), the data being sent as a plurality of content data packets;

(h_i) the reconstitution server distributing the plurality of content data packets to the first plurality of active terminals over the respective wide area connections;

(i_j) the first plurality of active terminals sending the plurality of content data packets to the originating terminal over said first communication path internal to and forming the local area network under control of their respective packet routing software; and

(j_k) the originating terminal receiving the plurality of content data packets to re-create the content data.

3. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 2, wherein in step (d_e) and/or step (h_i), the plurality of packets are distributed to the first plurality of active terminals in a round-robin basis.

4. (Original) The method according to claim 3, wherein the round-robin distribution of the plurality of packets is weighted.

5. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 4, wherein the round-robin weighting is determined in accordance with the bandwidth of the respective wide area connection between the terminal and the Internet.

6. (Currently Amended) A communications network comprising;
a plurality of terminals configured for running client applications and for connecting to the Internet, each of the plurality of terminals including packet routing software and being connected to one another by a local area network, and at least some of said terminals having an associated, different and direct wide area connection to the Internet, said plurality of terminals each having the ability to divide a request issued by one of said plurality of terminals into a plurality of packets and to distribute the plurality of packets to other ones of said plurality of terminals via the local area network under control of its packet routing software;

a reconstitution server, coupled to the Internet and a plurality of content servers,

wherein, in use, each active terminal periodically sends a first status message to the other of the plurality of active terminals in the local area network and to said reconstitution server to indicate that it is active;

wherein an originating terminal in the local area network generates a request for one of the content servers, divides the request into a plurality of packets and distributes the plurality

of packets between a plurality of active terminals via the local
area network; and

wherein each of said plurality of active terminals sends
packets received to the reconstitution server via each said at
least some terminal's separate associated and direct wide area
connections such that the originating terminal shares the
bandwidth of the separate associated wide area connections of said
at least some of said active terminals, and wherein the
reconstitution server sends the plurality of packets to the
content server.

7. (Previously Presented) The communications network according to claim 6, wherein, in use,

the content server sends content data to the reconstitution server in the form of a plurality of content data packets,

the reconstitution server distributes the plurality of content data packets between the plurality of terminals over the respective associated, different and direct wide area connections,

the plurality of terminals route the plurality of content data packets to the originating terminal;

the originating terminal receives the plurality of content data packets and re-creates the content data.

8. (Previously Presented) The communications network according to claim 6, wherein one or more of said plurality of terminals has more than one respective wide area connection.

9. (Previously Presented) The communications network according to claim 6, wherein the local area network comprises one or more terminals, further to said plurality of terminals, not having a wide area connection.

10. (Previously Presented) The communications network according to claim 6, wherein each of the active terminals in the local area network comprises a list identifying the other active terminals.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Previously Presented) The communications network according to claim 10, wherein an active terminal sends a second status message to the other terminals in the local area network prior to becoming inactive.

13-15. (Cancelled)